



But Whoever Drinks

Jesus provides eternal satisfaction for all who trust in Him.

JOHN 4:11-26

We are thirsty. Advertisers play to that thirst, promising us their product will give us what we are missing. Social media feeds our thirst as well, knowing what will cause us to keep scrolling through the endless feeds. People throughout history have had that same thirst, looking for something that will quench it—anything. Jesus encountered a woman thirsting as well and helped her find the water for which she longed.

What physical realities do people look to for satisfaction?

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

JOHN 4:1-54

In 722 BC, the Assyrians conquered Israel and destroyed its capital city, Samaria. They took many Israelites as captives and moved captives from other lands into the almost-desolate Israel. These newly-relocated peoples brought their religious traditions with them. In time, some of the remnant Jews married the new inhabitants and mingled their religious beliefs with Judaism. These were the Samaritans.

Not wanting to be used by the Pharisees in a false competition with John the Baptist, Jesus departed Judea to return to Galilee. He had a divine appointment with a woman who did not expect her life to change that day. Because of her, Jesus deliberately traveled through the Samaritan town of Sychar. Sychar is identified with Shechem, the original capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Although weary from His journey, Jesus was not too tired to fulfill His Messianic purpose to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). At noon, He sat on the edge of the well while His disciples went into the city to buy food. Into this setting came a Samaritan woman. When Jesus spoke to her, He broke several customs that surprised her. Men did not speak to unaccompanied women. Jews did not speak with Samaritans. Jewish strangers did not ask for help from a Samaritan woman. As we later discover, she was a woman of ill-repute, making the encounter increasingly odd. Yet, tradition would not prevent Jesus from reaching out to save her.

Jesus's encounter with the woman, her response, and the subsequent witness to the people of the city provide the primary focus for this week's lesson. We will learn how people can be led to see Jesus as the Christ and follow Him. The goal of Jesus's mission involves making one's way past cultural barriers to see lives transformed through the gospel of Jesus.

As you read through John 4:11-26, look for ways Jesus showed compassion to the woman. How does this encounter with the Samaritan woman help us understand the depth of Jesus's love for all people?

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

THIRST QUENCHED? (JOHN 4:11-15)

¹¹ “Sir,” said the woman, “you don’t even have a bucket, and the well is deep. So where do you get this ‘living water’?” ¹² You aren’t greater than our father Jacob, are you? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and livestock.” ¹³ Jesus said, “Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. ¹⁴ But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again. In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up in him for eternal life.” ¹⁵ “Sir,” the woman said to him, “give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and come here to draw water.”

VERSES 11-15

The Pharisees heard that Jesus’s disciples were baptizing more followers than John the Baptist and his disciples. When Jesus learned the Pharisees knew about this, He rightly concluded that the Pharisees would come after Him. So He headed north, traveling from Judea to Galilee. Samaria was located between the two territories. Jews typically would avoid Samaria by traveling through Perea on the eastern side of the Jordan River. Jesus did not.

The unnamed Samaritan woman went to the well to draw water in the middle of the day. Women typically drew water early in the mornings when it was cooler. Her going in the middle of the day highlighted that she was likely a social outcast. Jesus spoke to her, “Give me a drink” (v. 7). She was shocked by His request (v. 9).

Jews would have considered the Samaritan woman’s water bucket to be defiled and unclean. Jesus’s actions were shocking. But in His eyes, people were more important than protocol.

Jesus offered “living water” (v. 10), a term that typically referred to flowing water. Shechem had no rivers or streams; all local water came from wells. Thus, for Jesus to offer living water confused the woman. Thinking in physical terms, she noted Jesus did not even **have a bucket**, and there was no **living water** in the area.

The woman questioned Jesus’s ability. Could He provide water without having to dig a well as their **father Jacob** had done?

The implied answer was “No!” Jesus explained the water He provided was superior—it would permanently quench one’s thirst.

For those who received His “gift of God” (v. 10), Jesus explained this water would be ***springing up in him for eternal life***. Jesus was referring to the Holy Spirit, who alone can give life (6:63). Additionally, He was speaking of the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy that God’s people would “joyfully draw water from the springs of salvation” (Isa. 12:3).

Three times this passage speaks of being thirsty, emphasizing that Jesus was responding to a genuine physical need. What He was offering, though, was more. He offered to satisfy the woman’s thirst at a spiritual level.

How does our spiritual need resemble an unquenchable thirst?

BIBLE SKILL: *Dig deeper into the background and usage of key words or phrases.*

Examine Jeremiah 2:13 and 17:13, Zechariah 14:8, John 7:37-39, and Revelation 7:17. How do these passages’ use of the term “living water” give insight into what Jesus told the Samaritan woman? Write a one-sentence summary defining the term based on these passages.

SIN EXPOSED (JOHN 4:16-20)

¹⁶ “Go call your husband,” he told her, “and come back here.”

¹⁷ “I don’t have a husband,” she answered. “You have correctly said, ‘I don’t have a husband,’ ” Jesus said. ¹⁸ “For you’ve had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What

you have said is true.”¹⁹ “Sir,” the woman replied, “I see that you are a prophet.”²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem.”

VERSES 16-18

Jesus seemingly changed the subject by directing the woman to summon her **husband**. Jesus, though, was not changing the subject. He was drawing attention to the woman’s personal need and longing, a thirst she had been unable to satisfy.

This directive likely gave the woman a jolt. She explained she had no husband. Anyone else hearing this might have thought she was a widow or, less likely, that she had never been married. But Jesus knew the woman’s marital history and her current situation. Earlier in these verses, He revealed His humanity; He was thirsty. By showing He supernaturally knew of the woman’s marital history and status, Jesus revealed His divinity.

First-century rabbis taught that the maximum times a woman could be married was two, or under unusual circumstances, three. After five tries, this woman was now living with a man who was not her husband.

Notice that Jesus did not condemn the woman. John had earlier explained that Jesus came to save the world, not to condemn it (3:17). To “save the world” meant to rescue individuals from the power, presence, and penalty of sin in their lives. Although Jesus did not condemn the woman, He did not approve of her lifestyle. This woman was, to say the least, morally compromised. He thus confronted her with the truth about her sinful life.

The amazing thing is that Jesus knew all about her life without her having to say anything. It’s a reminder that Jesus knows what’s going on in our lives. Nothing is hidden from Him. He confronted the woman with her sin; He does the same with us today. He reminds us that we are all sinners in need of cleansing and forgiveness. And as John the Baptist proclaimed, Jesus came as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world (1:29).

VERSES 19-20

By acknowledging Jesus was **a prophet**, the woman conceded that He was correct about her life and lifestyle. This evidently made

her uncomfortable, so she directed the conversation in a different direction, the proper place for worship.

She may have even gestured toward Mount •Gerizim, which overlooked Jacob’s well. Samaritans believed the floodwaters in Noah’s day did not cover Mount Gerizim. They had chosen **this mountain** as the proper place of worship because it was near Shechem, where Abraham had first built an altar to God (Gen. 12:6-7). Samaritans believed Abraham had taken Isaac to Mount Gerizim to offer him as a sacrifice; Jews identify the site as Mount Moriah, which later became the location of the temple in Jerusalem. Thus, the proper location for the worship of God had been a point of bitter contention between the Jews and Samaritans.

Admitting our sin is the first step toward salvation. Confession and repentance of sin goes hand in hand with faith along the path of salvation. (See Acts 3:19; Rom. 10:9-10; 1 John 1:9.)

What makes admitting our past failures and current sin so difficult?

TRUE WORSHIP (JOHN 4:21-24)

²¹ Jesus told her, “Believe me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth.”

VERSES 21-24

Everything Jesus had to say about the proper way to worship is in these verses. Yet not once does He mention music style, the use of instruments, hymnals, or how to take up the offering or administer the Lord’s Supper.

Refusing to be drawn into the argument, Jesus stated that **an hour is coming** when neither Jews nor Samaritans would worship

TRUE FAITH (JOHN 4:25-26)

²⁵ **The woman said to him, “I know that the Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”** ²⁶ **Jesus told her, “I, the one speaking to you, am he.”**

VERSES 25-26

The woman said she was certain *the Messiah is coming* and that *he will explain everything*. The pronoun *he* in the woman’s statement is in the emphatic position in the Greek. The meaning is that *he* is not *you*. Thus in the woman’s mind, both she and Jesus still had to wait for this Messiah to appear.

Jesus then declared, *I . . . am he*. Two remarkable truths are in simple declaration. First, apart from His trial, this is the only time in Scripture Jesus plainly identified Himself as the Messiah (Mark 14:60-62). Even when John the Baptist’s disciples came asking if Jesus was the Messiah or should they look for another, Jesus did not say, “I am He.” Instead, He instructed John’s disciples to go back and report what they had heard Jesus preach and had seen Him do, including the miracles (Matt. 11:2-6).

Second, in using the phrase “I am,” Jesus was using the name God revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai (Ex. 3:14). In doing so, Jesus was identifying Himself as God in the flesh. Jesus was declaring that this Jewish (not Samaritan) man before her was the long-awaited Messiah and the source of the promised living water. He was the very one she had been looking for. The woman need look no further. Her anticipation was realized in the presence of the person before her. All her longing, every painful need, each point of confusion—everything could be satisfied in Jesus.

Believers find eternal satisfaction through faith in the promised Messiah. Like this woman, we come to Jesus bearing burdens of sin. Our guilt weighs heavily on us, but He lifts it and frees us to enjoy eternal life in Him.

**What role does faith play in a person’s understanding of spiritual truth?
How much knowledge does someone need to believe in Jesus and be saved?**

APPLY THE TEXT

- People find lasting spiritual satisfaction only in Jesus.
- Admitting our sin is the first step toward salvation.
- Believers must worship God in Spirit and truth.
- Believers find eternal satisfaction through faith in the promised Messiah.

As a group, discuss what worshiping in Spirit and in truth looks like today. How does your group help facilitate this type of worship? What actions can the group take to better encourage worship in Spirit and in truth?

Examine your life for areas in which you are looking for satisfaction apart from Jesus. How would you say these stack up against the living water satisfaction that Jesus alone can provide? What can you do this week to help move away from these actions, attitudes, or thoughts and put your focus instead on Jesus?

PRAYER NEEDS
